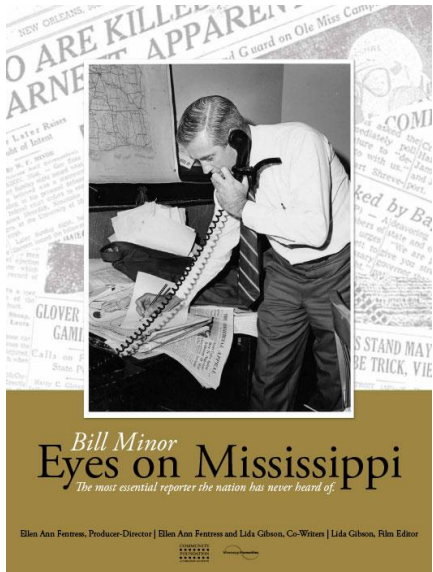


***Documentary on Mississippi Civil Rights Reporter  
To Premiere in Nashville  
During Black History Month***



*Eyes on Mississippi*, a 66-minute documentary film on dogged civil-rights reporter Bill Minor, will have its Nashville premiere Thursday, February 25 at the John Seigenthaler Center on the Vanderbilt University campus.

The film examines how Minor witnessed—and even occasionally shaped—U.S. history in his coverage of the civil rights movement. His even reporting from the struggle's Mississippi epicenter stood in contrast to the distorted pro-segregation journalism of most Mississippi outlets of the era. Legendary black leader Medgar Evers trusted Minor as the rare local white reporter with a sense of justice. Truth became costly. Three 1964 Freedom Summer volunteers decided to investigate after Minor broke news of a Neshoba County church burning. The trio's resulting murders inside the county awakened the nation.

Minor was the New Orleans Times Picayune's Mississippi correspondent beginning in 1947. His most crucial reporting, however, may have been his quiet, anonymous coverage of the Mississippi struggle for The New York Times and Newsweek. The scant use of contributor bylines in the era kept Minor's national work a secret from his employers at the New Orleans Times Picayune. Despite his anonymity to national readers, he was an open secret to the national press corps. Visiting reporters routinely turned to Minor on their arrival for information.

Fentress believes the documentary explores how Minor's position as a witness became a contribution of its own. "The title *Eyes on Mississippi* has two meanings. True, it was the name of Bill's long-time column, but it also was his strategy. He thought the fastest route to change was to get the unvarnished facts of the struggle out. The more eyes on Mississippi, the more the pressure for transformation," Fentress said. At 93, Minor remains a working journalist in Jackson today.

Minor won Harvard's Louis Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism in 1966, as well as Columbia's John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism in 1997.

Besides Minor, other notable figures from politics and journalism are film participants: Presidential Medal of Freedom winner John Doar, New York Times journalist Claude Sitton, civil-rights leaders Myrlie Evers and Jackson physician Dr. Robert Smith, former Mississippi governor William Winter, Pulitzer-Prize winner Hank Klibanoff and Times Picayune editor Jim Amoss. Both Mr. Doar and Mr. Sitton have passed away since being filmed.

The 6 p.m. screening at the Seigenthaler Center will be preceded by a reception at 5:30 p.m. The center is located at 1207 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

For further information about the Nashville screening, contact Fentress at [info@ellenannfentress.com](mailto:info@ellenannfentress.com) or the John Seigenthaler Center at 615-727-1304.